

6-6-06

To: House Transportation Committee

From: Vince Consiglio, President, ABATE of Michigan

RE: SB 297 Motorcycle helmet modification bill

Honorable Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I am an avid motorcyclist and have been for many years. I have averaged over 20,000 motorcycle miles per year for over 31 years. I urge you to vote YES today on this bill. As President of ABATE of Michigan, I represent thousands of motorcyclists in Michigan and across the Midwest, who support this bill. Making Michigan a FREE state has been a prime goal of our organization. We are a motorcycle rights group that believes that adult motorcyclists should have the right to choose their gear.

We believe in accident prevention. We know that the Federal Department of Transportation tests helmets for impact at 13 mph. Helmet lists, required in the 1969 law, have never been produced. There are no helmet test facilities in the state of Michigan for public use. Helmets do not prevent motorcycle accidents.

ABATE of Michigan has advocated for years: Motorcycle Safety Training, tougher motorcycle licensing, and a comprehensive motorcycle awareness program directed at car drivers. ABATE has gone to the financial well for motorcycle safety training many times since the program was started in 1982. In a span of more than 20 years, 5 times ABATE has initiated legislation to assist in funding. No state general funds have ever been used in the safety program. Motorcyclists alone, solely raise the money for this program. The Michigan Office of Highway Safety, (OHSP), funded the motorcycle safety program in the late '70's and early '80's. They could have assisted the Michigan motorcycle safety program with Federal 402 funds because motorcycle safety is in the 7-priority areas of the Highway Safety Act. It is ironic that OHSP can project the number of deaths, the number of accidents, and the number of dollars the helmet repeal will cost, yet it doesn't spend 402 funds directly on the motorcycle safety program. It did spend money on a cost assessment and evaluation, and a new logo and saying for the motorcycle safety program, while students have been turned away across the state.

Motorcycle Licensing is another area that the state of Michigan needs to address. From 1989-1993 the secretary of state studied motorcycle fatalities in Michigan. 49% of those killed on a motorcycle didn't have a cycle endorsement. A rider may get a cycle endorsement by taking the state motorcycle skills test or by completing a motorcycle safety class. The state test consists of a sharp turn, a normal stop in the box, a cone weave, a U-Turn in the box, a quick stop and a swerve. In 2002 the University of Michigan study showed that 44% of the fatalities in Michigan were unlicensed. Why is this rate so much higher than the national average of 25%? Why didn't OHSP spend any 402 funds to reduce this problem? ABATE has had a program for members to get them legal. Since 1986, ABATE has promoted, advertised, and had its members teach a one day motorcycle safety course which can be used to license riders.

ABATE has trained over 40,000 drivers training students in a one hour motorcycle awareness program across the state. We have promoted and stressed to car drivers to, "Look twice and save a life." We spent thousands of dollars and man-hours on promoting motorcycle awareness. We believe in accident prevention.

Across the country the weather, road conditions, and climate all play a role in motorcycle riding. I want to focus on the states around Michigan. I have included the motorcycle numbers for Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin, and compared them with Michigan. The fatalities per 10,000 figures for the surrounding states are 4.6 while Michigan is 5.0. Helmets do not prevent accidents.

Table I:  
**Motorcyclist Fatalities and Fatality Rates by State**  
Totals from 1993 - 2002<sup>1</sup>

State	Total Traffic Fatalities	Motorcycle registrations (thousands)	Motorcycle fatalities	Fatalities per 10000 Reg. Vehicles.
Illinois (a)	14,496	2,049	1,123	5.5
Indiana (b)	9,309	1,073	651	6.1
Minnesota (b)	6,080	1,297	381	2.9
Ohio (c)	14,054	2,387	1,192	5.0
Wisconsin (b)	7,481	1,818	624	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>51,420</b>	<b>8,624</b>	<b>3,971</b>	<b>4.6</b>
Michigan	<b>14,044</b>	<b>1,603</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>5.0</b>

(a) No helmet use requirement      (b) Required for riders under 18 years old  
(c) Required for riders under 18 years old and novices

<sup>1</sup> "Traffic Safety Facts 1993 - 2002 - Motorcycles" NHTSA and National Center for Statistics & Analysis

The tourist dollars from these states are there, waiting to come to Michigan. We are a prime state for motorcycle riding. The amount of money to be made, on large motorcycle events, is well documented.

SB 297, across the USA, will be the toughest helmet modification legislation. It's rules and regulations will place responsibilities on the rider to comply with. ABATE of Michigan has voted to support these amendments in order to see this legislation pass. We invite you to witness the state motorcycle exam on 6-7-06 on the capital steps from 9:00 am to 11:00 am and urge you to vote YES today and on 6-7-06 on SB 297.

Thank you,



Vince Consiglio  
President, ABATE of Michigan